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SUBJECT: UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE RECOMMENDS A TECHNICAL  
EVALUATION OF GALAPAGOS

1. Summary. The Director of UNESCO,s World Heritage Center, Francesco Bandarin, visited Ecuador to evaluate a new potential world heritage site (The Incan Andean Road) and assess the Galapagos World Heritage Site (WHS), in light of faltering conservation efforts under the Gutierrez administration. At a roundtable discussion with donors and other players, he stated that he would recommend to the World Heritage Committee (WHC) that a technical evaluation of the Galapagos be performed. This could lead to Galapagos being listed as an endangered heritage site. Ecuador sought to play down the visit, claiming that Bandarin came per invitation of the GOE. Bandarin, however, made it clear that there is real international concern about the state of conservation in the Galapagos. His trip garnered good press coverage (despite the ongoing political crisis) and delivered a strong and direct message to the GOE. End Summary.

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UNESCO Comes To Town  
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2. Francesco Bandarin, Director of UNESCO,s World Heritage Center and Chair of its Scientific Committee, spent nearly a week in Ecuador to evaluate adding the Incan Andean Road to the list of World Heritage Sites and to assess the Galapagos (the first ever WHS) in light of faltering conservation efforts over the last few years. He spent most of his time, however, addressing the Galapagos issue and discussed it with President Gutierrez, the Ambassador, the donor community, and many stakeholders in the Galapagos.

3. The donor community and the Ambassador presented a unified and consistent message to Bandarin, the one we have been presenting the last several months, stressing the three main problems in the Galapagos - park stability, alternatives for fishermen, and illegal immigration. The donors also provided concrete recommendations for addressing them, including formalizing the independent process for picking GNP Directors. Bandarin, in turn, carried the message (along with the recommendations) to his Ecuadorian interlocutors.

4. Bandarin,s concern for the Galapagos was very clear from the beginning. Before even visiting the islands, and during his meeting with the donor community, he announced that he would recommend a technical audit of the Galapagos at the next World Heritage Committee meeting in Durban, South Africa in July.

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Good Press Coverage  
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5. Despite a serious political crisis, Bandarin,s visit received ample press coverage that focused on conservation. The GOE sought to downplay Bandarin,s visit, saying it had invited him. But Bandarin, for his part, made it clear from the beginning that this trip was mostly to assess Galapagos for the WHC. (Note: At its 28th Committee meeting in China last summer, the WHC requested that Ecuador submit a report and plan for how it will conserve the Galapagos by February 1, 2005. Ecuador never did and this, we believe, spawned Bandarin,s visit. End Note)

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Comment  
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6. We are pleased with Bandarin,s visit. He carried the international community,s concern and our consistent message one more time to the GOE. He advocated our recommendations and pressed President Gutierrez for immediate action. We support his decision to recommend a technical assessment to the WHC, as this (and its implicit threat of listing Galapagos as an endangered WHS) will help focus the national and international community on the Galapagos pro